

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 EC BRU 09834 311803Z

63

ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR EEC EFIN EAGR

SUBJECT: EC FOREIGN MINISTERS ATTEMPT TO STRENGTHEN THEIR EC COUNCIL  
COORDINATING ROLE

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ON OCTOBER 30 THE EC COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (COREPER) AND EC COMMISSION PRESIDENT ORTOLI DISCUSSED A PROPOSAL FROM THE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS AIMED AT STRENGTHENING THEIR ROLE IN COORDINATING THE ACTIONS OF COUNCIL SESSIONS CHAIRED BY AGRICULTURE, FINANCE AND OTHER MINISTERS. AS A RESULT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, THE PRESIDENCY OF THE EC COUNCIL IS TO PREPARE AND DISTRIBUTE, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE COMMISSION, A DOCUMENT SUMMARIZING THE PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES OF THE OTHER MINISTERS; THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTERS IN THE RESTRICTED PRELIMINARY SESSION WHICH REGULARLY PRECEDES THEIR COUNCIL MEETINGS. BY MEANS OF THIS DEVICE, THE FOREIGN MINISTERS HOPE TO BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO COORDINATE THE WORK OF THE COUNCIL AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, TO URGE COMPROMISES ON ISSUES WHICH HAVE BEEN BLOCKED IN OTHER FORA. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 EC BRU 09834 311803Z

2. A PERMANENT DELEGATION SOURCE HAS BRIEFED US ON THE

EFFORTS OF THE EC COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES (COREPER) TO ESTABLISH PROCEDURES WHICH WOULD ENABLE THE EC FOREIGN MINISTERS TO ASSUME A GREATER ROLE IN COORDINATING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE EC COUNCIL. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE EC COUNCIL IS A SINGLE INSTITUTION DESPITE THE PRACTICE OF REFERRING TO MEETINGS OF VARIOUS MINISTERS AS "FINANCE COUNCILS" OR "AGRICULTURE COUNCIL". NO SUCH DISTINCTION IS MADE IN THE TREATY OF ROME AND ANY COUNCIL IS THEORETICALLY CAPABLE OF TAKING DECISIONS ON ANY SUBJECT.) OUR SOURCE REPORTS THAT THE PROBLEM INITIALLY CAME UP FOR DISCUSSION AT THE INFORMAL MEETING OF FOREIGN MINISTERS HELD IN LUCCA OCTOBER 18-19 WHERE FRG FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER SUGGESTED THAT PROCEDURES BE PUT IN PLACE TO IMPLEMENT THE DECISION TAKEN AT THE PARIS 1974 EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THAT IN ORDER TO ENSURE CONSISTENCY IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, THE FOREIGN MINISTERS SHOULD ACT AS INITIATORS AND COORDINATORS. COREPER HAS WORKED OUT WITH EC COMMISSION PRESIDENT ORTOLI A PROCEDURE WHEREBY THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL WIPP PREAPRE, WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE COMMISSION AND IN ADVANCE OF EACH FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL SESSION, A SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION HELD IN ALL COUNCILS SINCE THE LAST PREVIOUS FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING. THIS STATUS REPORT IS TO BE CIRCULATED IN ADVANCE OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS COUNCIL AND WILL BE THE FIRST ITEM TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE RESTRICTED (MINISTERS, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES AND ONLY ONE ADVISOR) PORTION OF THE COUNCIL. IT IS THUS HOPED THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTERS WILL BE ABLE TO EXERCISE THEIR INFLUENCE TO RESOLVE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE ARISEN IN OTHER COUNCIL SESSION. OUR SOURCE MENTIONED TWO SPECIFIC SITUATIONS WHERE THE FOREIGN MINISTERS MIGHT EXERCISE A ROLE AS COORDINATORS: THE EITHER-TO-ONE DISAGREEMENT WITH THE BRITISH OVER THE ADOPTION OF EC-WIDE EMISSION CONTROL STANDARDS FOR TOXIC POLLUTANTS AT THE "ENVIRONMENT COUNCIL" ON OCTOBER 16 AND THE BRITISH EFFORT TO HOLD OUR TOF A SEPARATE SEAT IN THE BANANA "PERMANENT GROUP" WHICH HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED UNDER THE LOME CONVENTION.

3. WHILE OUR SOURCE WELCOMED THIS EFFORT TO  
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PAGE 03 EC BRU 09834 311803Z

EXPAND THE POWERS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEIR ABILITY TO PRODUCE COMPROMISE COULD BE LIMITED. THE FOREIGN MINISTERS, FOR EXAMPLE, COULD FIND IT DIFFICULT TO TAKE POSITIONS ALREADY REJECTED BY THEIR OWN MORE TECHNICALLY QUALIFIED COLLEAGUES, WHO WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ISSUES INVOLVED. FURTHERMORE, IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT CONTENTIOUS ISSUES WILL BE RESOLVED THROUGH COMPROMISES INITIALLY

WORKED OUT IN MEMBER STATES' CABINETS RATHER THAN SOLELY THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS.

4. THIS NEW PROCEDURE IS, IN ANY EVENT, TO BE PUT INTO OPERATION AT THE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN BRUSSELS ON NOVEMBER 5-6.

5. COMMENT: IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHAT SUCCESS THE FOREIGN MINISTERS WILL HAVE IN THEIR ROLE AS COORDINATORS. WE RECALL THAT EVEN PRIOR TO THE 1974 SUMMIT DECISION THEY MET JOINTLY WITH THE AGRICULTURE MINISTERS IN OCTOBER 1974 TO RESOLVE AN IMPASSE REGARDING PRICE LEVELS FOR THE CAP; THEY WILL AGAIN MEET TOGETHER WITH THE AGRICULTURE MINISTERS ON NOVEMBER 24-25 FOR A STOCKTAKING SESSION ON THE CAP. HOWEVER, WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE WITH OUR SOURCE'S COMMENT THAT THE UNFREEZING OF DECISIONS BLOCKED IN BRUSSELS IS BASICALLY A MATTER TO BE RESOLVED IN NATIONAL CAPITALS. IT SEEMS MORE LIKELY THAT WHATEVER INFLUENCE THE FOREIGN MINISTERS ARE ABLE TO BRING TO BEAR IN OVER-RIDING OR MODIFYING THE VIEWS OF THEIR CABINET COLLEAGUES ON CONTENTIOUS ISSUES IS LIKELY TO BE PLAYED OUT IN CABINET MEETINGS AT HOME RATHER THAN IN EC COUNCIL MEETINGS IN BRUSSELS.  
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